



***Message of the Universal Esperanto Association on  
the occasion of International Mother Language Day,  
21 February 2023***

International Mother Language Day was created to emphasize the importance of the use of the mother tongue in teaching in schools. Children learn best through a language they fully understand, but all too frequently they receive instruction in some other language that they understand less well, if at all. As a result, they learn little, lose interest in education, and cannot navigate the modern economy effectively. A recent study by the World Bank noted that almost 37 percent of learners in lower or middle income countries are taught in a language they do not understand. Language rights and the right to education are indissolubly linked.

Respect for all languages advances unity in diversity, and international understanding. Furthermore, cultural and linguistic diversity are fundamental to sustainable societies.

Languages play an important role in development, if used to advance cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. Through languages we can strengthen co-operation, education, inclusiveness, cultural heritage, science, and political participation. Tolerance and respect are the paths to such development. Most importantly, by using languages effectively and with understanding, we advance education, cultural participation and economic prosperity.

We call to mind the three principles of UNESCO concerning language and education: Teaching in the Mother Tongue (building on existing knowledge); Multilingual Education at all Levels (equality); Intercultural Education.

Languages transfer and preserve cultures and knowledge, and cultural exchange enriches us all. As an association that works to resolve language problems in international relations and to facilitate international communication, the Universal Esperanto Association identifies with UNESCO's call for all countries to favour the conservation and protection of all languages used by the world's peoples, including indigenous languages – a particular focus of attention during the current Decade of Indigenous Languages.